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ABSTRACT

This conference focuses on one of the most problematic effects of limited emotional competency--violence. It reflects an awareness that violence requires the involvement of multiple participants from various perspectives. With the collaboration of those who deal with violence in some manner (e.g., educators, police and law enforcers, mental health counselors, business owners, etc.), the prospects are greatly increased that effective strategies can be further developed to decrease the incidence and threat of violence, while making schools and communities safe environments. The paper contains addresses by the Rhode Island Director of the Department of Mental Health, Retardation, and Hospitals; the Governor of the State of Rhode Island; the President of Salve Regina University; and the Chair of the Violence Prevention Task Force for the National Academy of Pediatrics. A post-presentation question-and-answer period is supplied. (DFR)

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THE GOVERNOR'S SUMMIT ON SAFE SCHOOLS IN SAFE COMMUNITIES

OCTOBER 1, 1998

SALVE REGINA UNIVERSITY
PELL CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
AND PUBLIC POLICY

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FORWARD

Recent shootings in several public schools have dramatically highlighted the troubling reality that any locale is potentially at risk for violent behavior. These highly publicized tragedies demonstrate that violence is not confined to certain specified segments of our society. It reaches into all areas, from the meanest of inner-city streets to tranquil suburban and rural communities.

While we are all vulnerable, we are not all helpless; we can seek to understand the factors that contribute to violent behavior and develop approaches to reduce the likelihood of violence. Such efforts must be made. A civilized society cannot passively allow the corrosive effect such behaviors have on the public sense of safety and well-being, as well as the sense of trust and belief held in our societal and governmental institutions.

A crucial beginning point is the unpleasant recognition that we are a violent society. It should be worrisome to us when violence becomes mundane, a normal part of our everyday lives, as it is for the vast majority of people who watch TV, go to movies, play video games, watch sports, and, in general, are exposed to print and broadcast media. There will need to be a major shift in societal values and attitudes, so that violence is no longer welcomed as dramatic, absorbing entertainment, and is no longer seen as an acceptable coping strategy, or as a means to an end, as a way to express emotion, as a way to exert influence, redress grievances, save face, or be noticed.

Violence serves multiple purposes, and has multiple causes. One of the contributing factors is a limited degree of social and emotional learning, also known as emotional competence. Many people are insufficiently equipped with the components of emotional competence, such as self-awareness (knowing and understanding one's feelings and moods), emotional self-regulation (the ability to effectively handle a wide range of emotions), empathy (the ability to appreciate what others are experiencing) and social skills (behaviors that are appropriately responsive to social roles, rules, and the requirements of smooth interpersonal relations). For more on this subject, particularly as it relates to the teaching of these competencies to children, see the recently published booklet from the Department of Mental Health, Retardation and Hospitals, entitled, *Update on Emotional Competency;* for a copy, call Norman DuPont, Ph.D., at 401-462-6042.

The *Update on Emotional Competency* illustrates how a lack of social and emotional skills is implicated in many behaviors, (e.g., substance abuse, unwanted teen pregnancies, AIDS, depression and suicide, and school problems, both academic and behavioral). The Summit on Safe Schools in Safe Communities focuses on one of the most problematic effects of limited emotional competency -- violence. This summit, convening policy-makers and program managers from a number of different professions, reflects an awareness that violence, with its multiple causative factors, requires the involvement of multiple participants from various perspectives. With the collaboration of those who deal with violence in some manner (e.g., education, police and legal, mental health, business, etc.), the prospects are greatly increased that effective strategies can be further developed that will decrease the incidence and threat of violence, while making our schools and communities safe environments.

GOVERNOR'S SUMMIT ON SAFE SCHOOLS IN SAFE COMMUNITIES

INTRODUCTION

A. Kathryn Power, Director, RI Department of Mental Health, Retardation, and Hospitals

Good morning everyone. Welcome and thank you all for coming to today's first ever governor's state-wide public policy forum on collaborative strategies for preventing violence in society – particularly in our schools and communities.

We are thoroughly impressed by this lovely Pell Center. And I know that you will all get a chance to look around at this incredible edifice that the congress appropriated money for. And you can actually look at Senator Pell's office. You will have a chance to look around and see the gorgeous appointments in this building. We thank the university for allowing us to use this marvelous facility for the first public policy forum here.

What we have here today has been a terrific collaboration of the Governor's Office, the Department of Education, the Department of Mental Health, Retardation, and Hospitals, many of our other sister agencies, and, most important, our host – Salve Regina University.

My name is Kathryn Power, and I am going to be the moderator for today's agenda. You have a packet of information with you. We will follow the agenda as closely as we can. We will have a few opening remarks, followed by our keynote speaker. There will be a break, then we will have a respondent panel. Then we will move into smaller discussions in the afternoon.

The charge for everyone today is to listen, to think, and to exchange ideas as we uncover potential risks for violence, discover creative solutions, and recover healthy and safe communities. The Children's Cabinet, the RI Danforth Policy Makers program, the Governor's Justice Commission, the Juvenile Justice Task Force – all of those efforts in the past year have increasingly focused on safety and nurturing as paramount in RI's goals for children, families, and communities.

The speakers and the respondents will engage you in a fresh exploration of the personal, cultural, and institutional challenges which confront us and which we must think about differently in order to keep our options open.

You are key decision-makers that have been invited here today. And regardless of your particular role or your current position, we ask you to focus on a broad, comprehensive strategy that binds us across sometimes differing sectors, different systems, different programs, and different professions.

In 1998 a culture of peace and non-violence is a difficult concept to imagine. But I ask you to think about it today. In order to have a society that is both just and compassionate, we need to think differently about the visible and the invisible influences that affect our thinking and our behavior. We need to address our internal and our external expectations of the role of our institutions – particularly of our schools and our

churches. And we need to address a clearer, more direct strategy of influencing collaboratively rather than trying to influence or control separately.

At the Department of Mental Health, Retardation, and Hospitals, of which I am the Director, working with our sister agencies – particularly DHS, the Human Services Department, the Department of Children, Youth and Families, and the Department of Health, we have embraced a strategy that focuses on the emotional competency of children and adults. Research tells us that focusing on these skills can result in the significant reduction in behaviors that are detrimental to the good order of society. Criminal justice, public health, social services, education, the media, and the religious communities all have a place and a role in this discussion.

How to address the presence and the prevention of violence when it is a reflection of frustration and hopelessness in the absence of self-esteem is a difficult problem. But we believe that by teaching and learning what constitutes strong emotional health, as well as social health, we can develop mastery and self-control, and can be held accountable for our lives.

Our minds, our physical bodies, our attitudes, our cultural icons, our family patterns, our community norms, our place in the larger world all participate in making us the human beings that we are. In the complex interactions of daily life we must learn to measure and be thoughtful about our responses to, and our prevention of, violent behavior.

I am delighted that all of you have chosen to join us in this journey for RI that we are beginning today. And I welcome your participation. It gives me great pleasure now to introduce the President of Salve Regina University, and our marvelous hostess. She has been an extraordinary partner in helping to make this happen today, Sister Terese Anton.

Sister Terese Anton, President, Salve Regina University

Lest I receive all of the credit for working to prepare this facility for today, I would like to extend gratitude to members of the Salve Regina University Community who worked diligently to prepare the facility for today. It is the first public forum, as Katherine noted, held in the facility. And as you drove up I am sure that you noticed that we are not quite finished on the exterior of the building. But it is a pleasure to welcome you to Salve Regina University, and to the Pell Center for International Relations and Public Policy.

This building is actually 146 years old and today you are joining such noted figures as Eleanor Roosevelt, Ulysses S. Grant, And Levi Morton – all of whom frequented this building years ago. So it is now not only a dormitory and a typical Salve Regina University classroom building, but it is also the home of the Pell Center for International Relations and Public Policy. And the important academic work planned for this public policy center is not unlike the work that you will encounter today.

The major differences between the various projects that are housed in this building are primarily differences in scope and in size. Whenever we explore individual and global issues, we find that violence, conflict, and discord are rooted in our thought. So for us to exchange our thoughts today, to work together for a more just and humane society is very important.

I view today's conference – Safe Schools in Safe Communities – as a call to action. It is hoped that as today's presentations and dialogues explore risk factors for youth violence, and how to minimize them at the personal, cultural, institutional, and community levels, we can mobilize our collective resources to create a more secure environment in our communities and for our children.

The mission of our university states that we recognize all people to be stewards of God's creation, and we encourage our students to work for a more harmonious, just, and merciful society. We are very diligent about instituting our mission statement in the reality of our campus life.

It is my hope that today your efforts will be fruitful in creating a more just, compassionate, and harmonious society.

Thank you for taking the time to be here. Thank you to Kathryn and the Governor's office for preparing this conference. We are pleased to host it and encourage you to come back again. Have a wonderful day.

A. Kathryn Power

Thank you very much President Anton. Everyone here will have the opportunity to meet many members of the Salve Regina family as you exchange conversation today because the faculty and staff of the university have very generously donated their time to help us capture all of the brilliant thoughts that you are going to have. They will be facilitating and recording and participating in many of the groups that you will share some time with so I want to thank them ahead of time. And Jay Lindgren will have the awesome responsibility of pulling us all together to have those comments shared throughout the group.

The impetus for our meeting today is the impetus of a leader who determined that it was important for us to take a look at violence across many sectors -- who determined that people were concerned throughout the landscape and across the national scene. People were concerned about what was happening across the nation, and in their own towns and cities. And with that leadership, this gentleman directed us to take a look at this issue in RI before some major occurrence. This whole notion of being able to look at things in a preventive way, thinking strategically across a prevention spectrum is a noteworthy facet of a great leader.

It gives me great pleasure to introduce His Excellency, the Governor of the State of Rhode Island, Lincoln Almond.

Governor Lincoln Almond

Thank you so much Kathryn. And think you and Sister Anton for putting together this particular conference. I cannot think of a better way to institute the Pell Center, than with a topic such as this. Jay Lindgren, Chief Edelmeyer -- it is always good for me as Governor to see the Chief Judge and the Head of DCYF sitting next to each other relaxing and having a cup of coffee. And I see the Child Advocate over here, as well. It is important that we all go down the same road on certain issues in the State of RI. We can accomplish much more by marching in sync rather than in opposite directions. So the teachers, the law enforcement officials, the school administrators – I see so many of

you out here who have done so much for the state of RI, and I am appreciative of your attendance here this morning.

Dr Spivak, thank you so much for coming here and sharing your insights with us this morning. It is certainly a pleasure for me to welcome you to this forum.

In Rhode Island, we have come a long way in insuring that our children enter our schools ready to learn. That is such a simple statement. And that is one of the key goals of the Children's Cabinet – to enter school ready to learn.

And there are many ways that we can do that. I have always said that one of the keys to school reform is early childhood programs and making sure that children enter school ready to learn. And those are healthy children. And those are children who participate in early childhood programs. And those are children who have good childcare. And those are children who attend good childcare programs that key in on good development. And that is going to start at an early age and move right up. And we must make sure that we are doing the right things to ensure that that occurs.

We have invested much money in our school districts in the last few years – 100 million dollars. I know that a lot of that money has gone to the urban schools. I know that we have to reach equity in the state of RI. And that is important. There are two people in this room who appreciate that – probably as much as anyone. Sister Anton and I grew up in the city of Central Falls at the same time – I was a classmate of her brother. So we lived in that urban setting. And we know how important it is for all children to have the same opportunities here in the state of Rhode Island.

In order for teachers to be able to share their knowledge with students, our schools must be safe. Our schools, thankfully, are among the safest in the US. We are fortunate in that we have among the fewest incidents of school violence in the nation. It is up to us to keep it that way.

Throughout our country we have seen an increase in violence in our schools. And we have been shocked by some of the things that we have seen. I do not think that it does any good for me to repeat what we already know. But think about this – think about *how* those incidents, whether in Oregon or Boston or Arkansas, occur. Think about what that does to the spirit of a community. Think about what that does to the spirit of children. Think about what that does to the spirit of families.

Nothing is more important than a child's safety. When parents drop their kids off at the school bus each day, they need to know that their kids are acquiring knowledge in a warm, caring environment. An environment where there is no threat of danger. And an environment that is a haven for learning and for discovery. I know that that is what my parents wanted for me, but it was a different world when I went to school. It was a different world when my children were going to school, but I had the same concerns. I have concerns now for my five grandchildren and for every child that same age – that they have the same opportunities that we all had. To make sure that when they go to school, that it is a very relaxing thing for everyone – both for children and for parents.

Another goal of the Children's Cabinet is to make sure that all youth are safe in their homes, their neighborhoods, and in schools. And we are doing all that we can to achieve that goal. I am a strong supporter of zero tolerance policy. I believed that when I was US Attorney, and now I believe it as Governor.

We need to take a tough, no-nonsense approach, to ensure that students and teachers are free from any threat of harm while in the classroom. We also need school administrators, teachers, parents and students working together to prevent violent acts on school grounds.

Additionally, we must continue to institute community-based code of conduct standards in our classrooms. What I mean is teaching children about the values of mutual respect, citizenship, and respect for authority. We must support authority in the state and in the nation.

We also need to support school based intervention programs for children who are engaged in disruptive activities. For students who cannot remain in school, we must create alternative education programs designed to return those students to the classroom like any other student.

In order for these programs to succeed in the community, we need school districts, parents, the department of education, the teaching unions, law enforcement officials, judges, DCYF, community based and private agencies to join forces -- to go down that same road with the same objectives.

These are just some of the measures that we can take to make our schools safer. I created a juvenile justice task force whose charge was to develop a plan of action to combat juvenile crime. That was a broad cross section of this community, and they gave me an excellent report.

One of the recommendations was to create more after-school activities, and to provide our youth with meaningful activities to participate in. In this fiscal year we have $250,000 allocated to Jay Lindgren and DCYF for after school programs. I also support the Child Opportunity Zone program, or the COZ's and we provided more funding for those in this particular budget. They will provide before and after school care, tutoring and summer programs to name just a few.

Additionally, I support additional funds for urban after-school programs. The Department of Education, working with Human Services, is developing programs now with the use of these funds.

When I was US Attorney for 21 years, I read and reviewed hundreds of detailed pre-sentence reports. And the federal system pre-sentence reports are extremely detailed. I used to just read them, sometimes at home, and just look at the background of the offender. And I always wondered whether we could have done something when that individual was an adolescent to help that person avoid a lengthy prison term in a federal penitentiary.

Our people need to feel valued. When we have troubled youth, the question is how to reach them. Sometimes it is with sports, sometimes through the arts. Sometimes through role models or a mentor. But we *can* reach them. And there is no doubt in my mind about it. So you and I and everyone here know that we have to do whatever we can to ensure that our classrooms will be a safe place for children to obtain the tools they need to compete in the future.

It is essential that we address potential risks before they occur by engaging in dialogue as we are today, and by creating solutions. It is about developing programs and initiatives to stem the tide against violence. It is about bringing principals, law enforcement officials, business, government, and community leaders together to discuss ways that we can pool our efforts to steer youth in the right direction.

As I said in my State of the State address this year, I know that children want to be challenged more. That is what the school reforms are all about with respect to testing, accountability, and assessment. I also know from experience that children want direction and they want discipline. They want these things and sometimes we do not give it to them.

I have always said that government cannot do it alone – we need the private sector, the community leaders, to step up to the plate. And I am very hopeful that today's event will generate that type of feeling and produce positive results. Our discussions here today will help us to continue to get the job done when it comes to putting even more prevention methods in place.

I would like to close by just thanking Sister Anton and Kathryn for co-chairing this conference. Their institutions are doing a great job with the Department of Education. And thank you all for being here this morning. I see so many familiar faces. People who share my concerns regarding our children. And I am confident that this will be a successful summit. You will leave with the feeling that we can do more to ensure that Rhode Island schools remain safe. Thank you very much.

A. Kathryn Power

Thank you very much, Governor. Now it gives me great pleasure to introduce the keynote speaker this morning.

Dr. Howard Spivak, Chair, Violence Prevention Task Force for the National Academy of Pediatrics

Good morning. Thank you Kathryn, very much. It is really a pleasure to be here. The Governor has left, but I would like to start by commending your governor for holding this conference. I have learned over the past several years that it is not enormously popular for elected officials to approach the issue of violence from a comprehensive perspective. The pressures, primarily, are to deal with this issue by increasing the size of police forces and by building more prison cells. While that is part of the agenda and the solution, it is a far more complex problem. To have political figures in the state who acknowledge that fact is both outstanding and reflecting a different way of looking at things.

I want to add, for the skeptics in the audience, that I am not simply "kissing up" here. And I say that for two reasons – the first is, I am not looking for a job. And the other is that if my wife were sitting here, she would vouch for the fact that I do not give compliments easily.

One of the things that I find most impressive about the issue of violence is how deeply and personally it affects all of us. I doubt that there is a single person in this room who has not been touched by the issue in a very personal way. So it is not just something that happens to other people – it happens to all of us.

I want to share a personal story with you – one of many that I have collected over the years. To give you a sense of not only how this issue touches even those of us who are involved in trying to provide leadership for prevention, but because this story illustrates some of the key elements of the issue.

A couple of years ago my sister in law who lives in the NY area, called me very upset and very concerned. And she told me a story about what happened to her son and which led to her concerns. It seems that the day before she called me, her son, then a junior in high school, was in his room doing his homework when the doorbell rang. A classmate of his was outside and wanted to speak with my nephew. So my sister in law went upstairs to call her son, and he went outside to talk with the young man. About ten minutes later he came back into the household bloodied up. It turned out that the young man was the boyfriend of my nephew's chemistry lab partner. The boy was concerned that my nephew was coming on to his girlfriend, and he wanted to make sure that my nephew knew that that was unacceptable. So he had a friend of his hiding in the bushes, and when my nephew went outside they beat him up.

My sister-in-law called the police, and the policeman came to their house and took down all of the information. And after he was done gathering the information he turned to my nephew and said, "well, son, you have two choices here. You can either go to the nearest emergency room and have all of your injuries documented and then go down to the police station and file a formal complaint and nothing will happen. But," he said, "you have another choice. You have friends, don't you?" He turned to my brother-in-law and said, "that's how we deal with things, isn't it?"

And that's not the end of the story, because, in fact, the very next day my nephew went out and got about a dozen of his friends who got a bunch of their friends together – ultimately accumulating a group of about sixty young men. And they went out and found these two boys and beat the crap out of them.

My sister-in-law called me because she was scared for her son, and because her efforts to seek help were futile. And she also knew that it was purely luck that a weapon hadn't been pulled in either of these two episodes, and that somebody wasn't more seriously injured.

My nephew came out okay, there were no further repercussions (although there could have been), he is now in college. But this episode represents many of the key elements of what violence is about for young people in this country.

Now I believe, since all of you are here at this conference, that you all understand how serious this is. But I also think that it is extremely important that we understand how unique this issue is to this country. Because it is, in many ways, an American problem. The United States not only has one of the highest homicide rates in the world, but the highest homicide rate of the fifty wealthiest countries in the world. Our homicide rates in this country are 5 – 70% higher than homicide rates in other countries in the world – including our nearest neighbors. This is not a North American problem, this is an American problem.

There are approximately 25,000 homicides per year in this country, and that is just the tiny tip of the iceberg, because for every one of those homicides there are one-hundred episodes of persons who show up at the ER with violence-related injuries. That is 2.5 million violent injuries per year. And *that* is just the tip of the iceberg, because there are also uncountable violent injuries that never come to the attention of the health system, the police, or anybody else. And if current trends continue, more children in the next century will die from guns than from automobile crashes.

To put this in cold, hard, cash terms, there was a study done for congress in the late 1980s looking at violent injuries for this country in 1985, thirteen years ago, where they found that violent injuries had short and long term costs of over 60 billion dollars just for that one year alone. This is not only costing us on a horribly human level, but this is very much costing us out of our pocketbooks as well. So when people ask why the health care system is drowning in excess costs, this is one of the reasons.

And the last thing that I would like to say about the general magnitude of the problem, is that for many years we have defined it as a problem of inner cities. And have been able to point and say, "well it's not really *our* problem. It's *their* problem." Fortunately, we are beginning to understand this differently. But unfortunately it took horrendous events in communities like Pearl, Mississippi, and West Paducah, KY, and Jonesboro, AK, and Edinburgh, PA, and Springfield, OR and Richmond, VA among others, to make us realize that this is an issue that affects every child, in every community, of every race, from every socioeconomic group across the country.

If we are going to deal with this issue effectively, then we must begin to understand it better. We must understand why young people are so caught up in this. Because it is in that understanding that we will figure out how to deal with this problem more effectively.

And before I go into this I do want to say, because these issues tend to be overwhelming and tend to evoke a sense of both helplessness and hopelessness, that the flip side of this is that many of us began 15 or 16 years ago in the city of Boston, to deal with it in a multi-disciplinary way. And in the last 3 – 4 years we have seen a dramatic decline, not only in the death rates of young people in the city, but in violent injury rates as well. And we have seen a decline in violent crime. But it takes a while and you need to get started. This is a problem that evolved over decades, and the solutions take a while to kick in. Because we are talking about changing attitudes and values in the community as a large part of the solution here, and we all know that that takes a very long time.

But it can work. And it is very important that you keep this in mind as you hear some of these issues and think about them and feel powerless and helpless around them. Because you are really not powerless and helpless.

Violence as Learned Behavior

The first point that I want to go into, in terms of our understanding of violence and young people in this country, is that violence is a learned behavior. We are not born with an innate need to harm each other, we learn to. And the huge disparities in violence and homicide rates between this country and other countries helps to reinforce that concept.

Because if violence was inevitable, if we as human beings were bound to be violent, then we would not see rates so low in other places. Dramatically low in other places. And we must keep that in mind, as well, because it forces us to own up to this issue and to accept it as an issue that we must deal with in this country. It helps us to begin to understand that there are elements in our culture that promote a different kind of behavior that puts young people at such enormous risk.

Children learn violence in every aspect of their lives. They learn from their families, and within their family units. Often from infancy. They learn it not just from being abused, but from witnessing violence in their family – especially when they are young. And there is growing evidence to suggest that the presence of adult violence in

the home – even of a young infant – begins to establish behavior patterns for these children that begin to put them at risk for later violence in their lives.

The issue of domestic violence and battering is a serious one in this country. Some estimate that the violence in families may be as high as one-third the families in the US. That means a lot of children are being exposed to violence. And that exposure is the strongest risk and predictive factor for a young person to be involved in violence as an adolescent or young adult.

So our solutions obviously must include identifying families who have violence in them. But as important, we must recognize the effects on young children, and make sure that the children receive services as well, as we make sure that the adults are safe in the family also.

Children also learn violence in their families from the way that they are disciplined. This is often debated around the country, but there is twenty years of literature that shows a strong relationship between exposure to regular corporal punishment, and risk for violent behavior and violent crime activities as adolescents and young adults. And if you understand anything about child development, it makes perfect sense. Because when you hit a child in anger, you are not teaching the child not to do what you are angry about. You teach the child that when you are angry, you hit.

When a parent yells at a child fifteen to twenty times during the day, and then it is dinner time and they are trying to make dinner, they are feeling hassled and everything else is going on, and the child does that same thing again. Instead of talking to the child, the child is hit, the message to the child is not "don't do that," because the twenty times earlier in the day it was just a verbal response, but the twenty-first time the parent gets angry and hits. That is the message to the child.

Most interpersonal behaviors among children are learned and well established before they enter school at age five. We need to understand that because it means that parents are the primary teachers of interpersonal behaviors. And if anger and violence are linked, then that is what children are learning.

That does not mean that we cannot intervene later on – we can. We can certainly teach children other ways of doing things. But it is extremely hard to change established behaviors. And we must begin to find opportunities to teach positive behavior and to reduce the number of high risk behaviors that children are exposed to before we have access to them within our educational institutions.

Children also learn violence in their communities. That is increasingly obvious. There is barely a community in this country in which children are not exposed to violence in one way or another. It is highlighted in the news, so you cannot even protect children from exposure to it.

But let me give you some data to tell you how extensive this is. In a survey of elementary school children in the city of New Orleans, ninety percent of children said that they had witnessed violence. Seventy percent had seen a weapon used. Forty percent had seen a corpse.

It is estimated that in the city of Los Angeles, between ten and twenty percent of homicides in that city are witnessed by children. In a study at the Boston City Hospital Emergency Room of children under age six, it was found that over ten percent of those children had witnessed a violent event involving a weapon before their sixth birthday.

This is very pervasive and very prevalent.

I would just like to add one additional bit of information about violence on the community level, although I will qualify this point by saying that this is an entirely different discussion that requires attention in and of itself. And that is that the experience of poverty and the experience of racism by children is, by itself, a set of violent events. So it should not surprise us that children of color, and children raised in poverty are particularly at risk. They have experienced violence every day of their lives. Not necessarily in the way that we define violence, but they are treated in violent and demeaning ways regularly. And that becomes part of their picture of the world. And that becomes part of what affects them and how they think.

Children also learn violence in schools. Now, I used to get very perplexed looks when I would say that. But after the events of last spring, I almost need to say no more about the matter, and simply state it as is. But the fact is, surveys of high school students show that about twenty-five percent of high school students report bringing guns or knives to school at least on occasion. And that was about a third of boys and about a fifth of girls. So girls are not immune to this. Kids know that there are weapons in school and that provokes them to bring weapons. It is the only way that they are able to feel safe.

I will add, as difficult as it is to accept, that adult role models in schools do not always model the best strategies to children. And even teachers who I have seen teaching conflict resolution and violence prevention in the schools, have never themselves learned to deal with conflict in a healthy way. So when they get angry after teaching a class on conflict resolution, their behavior is inappropriate. We have got to do more than teach children about this – we must work with adults as well. So that they can provide a model of appropriate behaviors – whether they are parents or teachers or school personnel or anyone who is in a position in which children look to them as models of appropriate behavior.

I started by saying that violence is an issue that affects all of us and that touches all of our lives – that is a reality. And adults must come to some closure and understanding about this or they cannot deal with it effectively in their own lives and they certainly cannot model good behaviors for children.

Lastly, children learn violence from the media. The media is an easy target here, but we really do have to understand this and recognize it and deal with it. This is not simply an issue of the First Amendment. This is an issue of child health. The average child in this country is exposed to fifteen to twenty thousand violent events per year – on television. That is twelve violent events an hour on adult programming and twenty violent events an hour on children's programming. So children's programming is even more violent than adult programming. And if you have not watched Saturday morning cartoons recently I encourage you to do so – it is incredible. And not only is there a lot of violence, but there is no consequence to that violence. You cannot kill cartoon characters – you can chop off their heads and in the next frame they will continue going on with their business.

The violence we represent in television is the first choice for dealing with conflict. It is often done by the heroes – both in children and adult programming – and it is entertaining. It is almost always successful, and there are rarely negative consequences. People get shot on TV and they either fall over dead or hold their shoulders and go on with their business. So that children show up in emergency rooms with gunshot wounds

and one of the things they say is, "I cannot believe it hurts." It sounds incredibly bizarre. But they have watched so many people shot who either fall over dead or hold their shoulders and go on with their business. There is no pain.

Now think about children who witness violence in their homes. Who see it in their communities. Who experience it, or at least fear it at school. And witness it constantly on television. It should not surprise us at all that children in this country – many children in this country – are learning that violence is an appropriate and acceptable form of behavior to deal with conflict. That it is more likely than not going to get them what they want. And that they are unlikely to suffer any significant consequences. That is what we are teaching our children. That is what our children are learning. It is very real.

Intimate Violence

The second point that I want to make is that most of the violence that children and adolescents in this country face is intimate violence. While we have stereotyped the context of violence as being stranger related, occurring in dark alleys, the majority of violence that we actually experience in this country occurs in bars and in bedrooms and parties and dances.

Over fifty percent of homicides in this country occur as a result of arguments. Less than fifteen percent of homicides in this country occur in the context of a premeditated crime like robbery or rape. In fact the typical event of homicide in this country occurs between two people who know each other – who are not strangers. More often than not they are men. Almost always from the same race. Almost always from the same neighborhood. A moderate number of cases involve alcohol. People get into an argument. The argument escalates into a physical fight, a weapon is pulled, and someone is killed.

So most of the violence in this country is not stranger related. It is not racial. It involves two young men of the same race who know each other, who get into an argument, and then one kills the other.

There are two elements of this that I would like to focus on for a minute. One is the issue of alcohol. We spend a lot of time talking about drugs in this country. We have a drug czar in Washington. The drug czar, and most of the conversations we have about drugs, focus on every drug except alcohol. But the first three most common drugs that children use and are influenced by are alcohol, alcohol, and alcohol.

And alcohol greatly escalates the likelihood of violent behavior and lowers the threshold for committing violence. That has been well studied. Alcohol is also accessible and the large majority of young people who use drugs, use alcohol as their primary (if not only) drug.

The second point that I would like to make about this is that while, without question, the criminal justice system is an important part of this issue and an important part of the solution to the issue, we have historically used the threat of punishment as the primary deterrent to violent crime in this country.

Now I ask you to consider – what is the likelihood that two young men, both of whom have been drinking, and who get into an argument, are considering the consequences of their behavior in the heat of that argument? Not at all. So the severity of punishment alone has proven not to be, in and of itself, a major deterrent for violent crime. Most interactions are committed and grow out of arguments. Therefore, the

consequences are not what drive the agenda. What drives the interaction is the learned behavior that people have developed in response to anger and conflict.

Availability of Handguns

The third area that I would like to go into is the issue of guns. This always gets people a little nervous as well. But I would like to talk about this because I think that it is extremely important as well. There are over two-hundred million guns in circulation in this country. Over eighty million of those guns are handguns – and that is really what we are talking about with respect to violence – it is handguns. About a third of those handguns are unregistered – and therefore untraceable – either because they have been stolen or they have been bought through a process in which a registration did not occur. And the ammunition for handguns has evolved to the point at which it is actually more dangerous and produces more injuries than the ammunition produced for military weapons.

The access to guns in this country is a serious problem. There are more gun dealers in this country than there are gas stations. And any of you in this room can become a gun dealer quite easily. You fill out an application – I think that it is about three to four pages – and send it in with a check for one hundred dollars for a three year registration from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms. The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms has four hundred employees in total to deal with alcohol, tobacco, and firearms. If your application is not acted upon within sixty days it is automatically approved. So last year there were around seventeen thousand applications for gun dealership and I believe that something like thirty-five were rejected.

So access to guns is a big problem and we need to deal with it. More and more police departments and judges and people involved in the Criminal Justice Department are up in arms, literally, about this because it puts their lives in great danger. So we have to get past this debate in which we can \barely get regulation of semi-automatic weapons, let alone hand guns in this country. And keep in mind that it is handguns that are the problem – not rifles and not semi-automatic weapons. Handguns are responsible for the majority of gun related deaths in this country.

But on top of regulation of guns, we must deal with the attitude that we have about guns. People buy guns to protect their homes from outside invasion. There are several problems with that. The first is that when you have a gun, you do not lock it up in your closet with the ammunition in another place. You keep it in you dresser drawer, loaded. It must be easily accessible – otherwise, what is the point? The reality is that most kids do not go out to their gun dealer to buy their guns – they go to their parents' night table drawer and they get it. Either themselves or through their friends.

And the reality is that if you own a handgun, it is more likely to be stolen, or to be used in a family homicide, or to be used in a family suicide than to be ever used for its intended purpose – which is to protect your home and your family from an invasion. And in fact study after study has shown this with one exception. And that is a study by the NRA, which is a very interesting study that I will not go into in great detail. However, to give you one example of the quality of the methodology of this survey, I believe that there is one elderly woman in this study who said that she used the handgun seventy-eight times in the last year to protect herself from assault and from outside invasion. I challenge you to consider the likelihood of that and to consider the validity of the data

that they use. And you will hear this data quoted all the time by people who are against the regulation of handguns.

There is a wealth of data that reports the serious risks of handgun ownership that are methodologically sound. They have been published in rigorous scientific journals. However, interestingly enough, the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta has lost its capacity and ability to fund studies that look at the issues around gun ownership. The gun lobby almost de-funded the entire injury center in Atlanta because they were funding gun-related research.

Adolescent Sturm und Drang

The last area that I want to go into is the issue of adolescence. It is not in adolescence where young people learn to be violent. As I said earlier, that learning process occurs much earlier – in childhood. But adolescence is the age at which young people become particularly vulnerable to becoming violent. And they become vulnerable not because of pathological conditions that they have – unless one considers adolescence to be a pathological condition, which some do. But it is because of the normal, developmental stage that they are going through and the normal developmental processes that they go through that put them at risk.

Now I do not expect all of you to leave here as experts in adolescent development, but I really do want you to understand this because it is so extremely important. Teenagers are separating from their families. Part of that separation process is extreme narcissism. There is a joke in my household that my sixteen-year-old daughter never lets a reflective surface go unnoticed. They are extremely narcissistic, but that makes them enormously vulnerable to even minor insult.

Something that we as adults would shrug our shoulders at is extremely traumatic for a teenager. Not because they are pathological, but because that is what their makeup is. So children get into fights over name calling – of themselves and of their mothers (not their fathers, though; I have never understood that), the threatened loss of an object, like a hat or a pair of sneakers, or over an indirect insult – a he said/she said kind of event.

Kids are killing themselves and each other over name calling and baseball hats. But it is part of their normal developmental makeup that makes them so vulnerable to this kind of interaction.

Secondly, adolescents are solidifying their sense of sexual identity. Part of that process is over-identifying with the gender role models that we put in front of them. What are we doing to the young men in this country when every hero and every role model that we put in front of them is violent – and they are. And even in humorous role models, like situation comedies, there may not be physical violence, but most of the humor in the programs is insulting put-downs. So we are teaching boys that we relate to each other by putting each other down and getting into fights and using violence.

And we are seeing a new wave of violence developing among girls. Part of that is also probably linked to the fact that there is a growing number of violent role models that we are putting up in front of girls, as well. Violent women heroes, as well as women who also use verbal put-downs as their primary way of interacting with their friends and with other people that they relate to, and who are appearing in popular culture.

The third area of adolescent development that is concerning is the issue of risk taking. All of us took risks as teenagers. Most of us have repressed those risks because it is a little scary to think back about the risks that we took. Risk taking is normal – it is how young people learn what their boundaries are. They do not refrain from doing something because they are told not to, but because they learn. They test the waters and they learn the consequences of their behaviors.

That must happen. All kids must go through this. All kids must rebel. All kids must test their limits so that what they have learned verbally has some context for them. That is okay. As long as young people have relatively safe environments to be in, and as long as weapon carrying is not one of the risk taking behaviors they have to do. And right now young people do not have safe places to be in, and weapon carrying is one of the behaviors that they try out because it has been represented as a norm. They are trying to find out what their place is in that kind of behavior.

And the last area that I want to go into in the context of adolescent development is the issue of peer pressure. Part of the separation from family is over identifying with your friends. Your peers have much more influence over you as a teenager than your parents or than other adult role models do. We have used that very effectively through the development of peer education and peer counseling programs.

The problem is, when it is the expectation of a peer group that when you are in conflict you have to fight, then you have to fight. And when we survey teenagers about what their options are when you are in conflict, they only give you two options. One is to run away, the other is to fight. Running away is not a real option. It is only a theoretical option when the peer group that they are in believes that fighting is the way that you resolve conflict and save face.

So teenagers are at great risk for violence and it shouldn't surprise us that we are seeing homicide rates shifting lower and lower down the age scale. It used to be that homicides rose in late adolescence. It now starts rising at ages thirteen and fourteen. And it should not surprise that while we have seen a decline in homicide rates in this country over the last four years, that decline has affected every age group but one – adolescents. And there we have actually seen a rise. Teenagers are very vulnerable.

Putting the Pieces Together

So what do we have out of all of this rambling that I have just done? We know that violence is a learned behavior. Children learn it in their homes, in their schools, in their communities, and in the media. We know that violence is intimate – it is not strangers. It is not dark back alleys. It is friends, family, in social environments, often under the influence of alcohol. We know that guns are a very big problem. Not just because they are there, but because we have attitudes in this country and in most of our communities that gun ownership is appropriate and that it promotes safety, when, in fact, it does the exact opposite. And we know that teenagers are most vulnerable and need special attention to deal with this.

Now, what are we going to do about it? I think that much of the rest of today is going to be focused on that. But I would like to talk for a little bit about this. I do think that there needs to be some focus on this. And there is growing prioritization in many communities trying to take this on.

Number one, we have got to deal with guns in this country. I cannot say that too many times or loudly or strongly enough. We have got to get guns out of circulation. Handguns – I am not talking about recreational guns. Handguns in particular, and we have got to start better understanding what the real risks are of gun ownership in homes, and the misperceptions of what that means in terms of safety versus danger and risk.

We have got to deal with this on a national and state level. That is where the laws that influence gun ownership are. But we also must deal with this on a community level, because it is not at the national level that attitudes about guns are going to change. That can only occur at the community level.

I was invited down to Jonesboro, AK about a month after that horrendous event in which those four young girls and the teacher were killed. The community was devastated. Not just because of the death of those five individuals, but because many of their values had been assaulted. The rug had been pulled out from under them. Central in that was that the ownership and use of guns was a core cultural value for them. And yet those two young boys didn't dream up putting on military uniforms or battle fatigues and setting off a fire alarm and ambushing their classmates. They learned that. They learned it from the values in their community. They learned it from the media exposures. And they certainly learned that in some way the use of violence was an acceptable behavior to control girls. It was not an accident that the five dead people in that incident were women and girls. It was not an accident that guns were chosen as a way of exhibiting control. And it was not an accident that they could walk into the house of one of their grandfathers' and raid an arsenal. That was what they did.

What Do We Do Now?

We have got to deal with guns. Guns are one of the major reasons why death rates from violence are so much higher in this country than other countries. In Great Britain one single, horrible event of shooting children in a schoolyard resulted within weeks in the strongest gun control policies in the world. You cannot even transport a gun from a gun club to your home. It stays in the gun club, locked up. Period. No negotiations.

And yet we have had episode after episode. Just as horrendous. And we are still debating regulation of semi-automatic weapons in this country. And the only semi-automatic weapons that are un-sellable in this country are those that are manufactured in this country so you can mail order internationally semi-automatic weapons if you want to.

The second area that we really need to focus on, and I cannot say this any less strongly, is the issue of domestic violence. It is the context in which most young people most intimately learn about violence in this country. We have got to screen for family violence in every setting. Health. School. Mental Health. Criminal justice. If you do not ask, you do not know.

The average battered woman in this country has nine emergency room visits before she is recognized as battered. And women walk into the emergency room with black eyes, say that they walked into a door, and nobody asks them what really happened. It is IMPOSSIBLE to get a black eye from walking into a door. Your face just ain't shaped that way.

If you don't ask, you don't know. And, as I said earlier, we not only need to help the individual members of a family experiencing violence to be safe -- we have to also treat the long-term injuries from that violence, which are predominantly emotional. I have said this twice and I will say it a third time: the highest and strongest risk factor for involvement in violence as a young adult, is the exposure to violence early in one's life in the family. So shelters are important, but mental health counseling is extremely important, as well. Treating the mothers is crucial, but treating the children is equally important.

The third thing that we must do is to make sure that we have systems in place to identify and serve high risk kids. We know who these kids are. They are absent from school a lot. They are bullies. They get into a lot of fights. They are chronic victims. They have deterioration in school performance. They are isolated from their peer groups. They exhibit behaviors that make them identifiable. We cannot dismiss these kids. We must find them and treat them. Which means that we must, again, look for them.

And I will add, in this context, that I am a strong supporter of the "No Tolerance" policy. But there are three kinds of "no tolerance." There is no tolerance to violence. There is no tolerance of weapon carrying. And there is no tolerance of rejection. If you kick a kid out the front door of your school because they do something bad, then you lose him. You cannot serve them once they go out that door. So we cannot dismiss and expel these kids from our schools. We have to find programs for them and the programs have to be immediate so that they never leave the door. If a kid is doing something concerning, they go right into services – if necessary with their families, which is, quite frankly, often the case. But we cannot lose them.

Along the same lines, we really must look at our schools a little differently. We need to make our schools safe places to be and kids don't now feel they are safe. My own son said to me (he is now twelve) that he takes his life in his hands every day when he goes to school. Kids are scared. We need to do things to make our kids feel safe. And that is not metal detectors. That is creating an environment that is supportive and nurturing and promotes success. Because in many cases we have developed schools that promote failure.

Every time a school budget gets cut, what do we cut? All of the programs that allow kids to feel good about themselves – sports, art, music, shop. Especially academically weak kids. We take everything away from them, thereby making them feel worse. More rejected. We also have to look at our schools as multi-service centers. I am not proposing that we put all of this on the backs of school administrators and teachers. We cannot – they are already overwhelmed.

We have to look at ways of bringing resources and services into schools. And looking at schools as multi-service centers for children and families. Where, if a kid needs something, it is there. We do not have to worry if they are going to get down the street to the places where services are provided, or worry if there is going to be proper follow up.

How are we going to connect our school interventions without other social and mental health interventions? If they are integrated into a school setting – if the schools are being kept open later so that they are service centers after school hours. If there are activities in them at night, in the evenings, on weekends, then they become healthy,

nurturing, supportive, service oriented systems. Where, among other things, children are learning.

The next thing that we have to do is deal with the media. That is a big agenda, and in many cases it must be done on a national level. But there are things that can be done locally as well. There are alliances that one can make with local media outlets. Media, particularly the news media, has been running a campaign for decades demonizing young people. All you hear about them is what is wrong with them and what is bad about them. You can work with local media to put positive role models out there. And tell stories that at least give another side to what the lives of children are about. And one of the important elements of the program in Boston was enlisting the local media, with public service announcements as well as local programming that at least began to broaden the image of young people – about themselves and about others.

And the last thing that I want to touch on before I close, is that we really need to take a careful look at the kinds of services that exist in our communities. That not only support children, but that support families. Parents can be better parents if they have resources and supports around them. High risk parents, who often create the most dysfunctional environments for their children, are high risk because they are isolated themselves. Teenage parents are the greatest example of that. They are extremely isolated, extremely angry, extremely overwhelmed. There need to be services around them. We have to stop criminalizing these families, and begin to embrace them.

So while I do believe that we need to continue to reform the welfare system in this country, we must do it in a humane way that does not make poor women feel like criminals. Several decades ago we feminized poverty in this country. About two years ago we criminalized it. What kind of message is that to young women who are trying to raise children in a healthy environment? We need good childcare in communities. We need places for children to be after school. Not only in school buildings but in other places. We need social environments where children and families can be in their free time.

We need to support families when the parents have to work – which means creating safe environments, safe places for children, and a sense that they are valued as a part of the community. And this is true across all types of communities. We certainly have very vulnerable populations in our inner cities and our poor rural areas. Families living in suburban communities are beginning to feel increasingly isolated. And the resources that even more affluent families have to support their role as parents is diminishing. So, foreseeing this cut in our affluent communities, what is happening in our poor communities? It is very difficult. I also believe that we have enough resources to do this, but it means rethinking and reallocating where our resources are going. And how we are investing in our communities.

And There is Hope

I am going to close with a last story. I started off by saying that this is an overwhelming and complex issue that often makes us feel helpless and hopeless. And every time I get a sense that I am feeling that way myself, I think about a young man. His name is Roland. He is a peer counselor in one of the programs in Boston. He was sent to Boston by his parents at the age of sixteen from Los Angeles. He was sent to live with his aunt and uncle in Boston because his parents were afraid for his life.

The episode that led to his transfer went like this: Roland and two of his friends were walking down the street in Los Angeles. Pretty much minding their own business. They ran into a group of three or four other kids -- not a gang -- from a couple of blocks away. They got into an argument. Roland became the spokesperson for his group. Another person was the spokesperson for the other group. In the midst of the argument, the other kid pulled out a gun and shoved it in Roland's face and said "get out of my face or I am going to shoot you."

And Roland said that everything that he had learned in his life said that he had to stay there and get shot. And for reasons that he cannot quite understand, he turned around and walked away. And what is incredibly ironic about the situation is that later that day, Roland playing basketball in an outdoor court with some of his friends, and who should come along but those three or four young men who they had gotten in a fight with. And they ended up all playing basketball together. So Roland almost got himself killed in an argument that he doesn't even remember the content of, with another young men who he ended up playing basketball with four hours later.

The thought that I would like to leave you with, is that if a young man like Roland, who had been told all his life to behave in a certain way and to do certain things that put his life in serious jeopardy was able to do something different – against the tide and risk losing face, then there is a whole lot that the rest of us can do.

Thank you.

POST-PRESENTATION QUESTION AND ANSWER PERIOD

Questions:

Q: As a parent, I am noticing that our kids are pairing off at younger and younger ages with every generation with support, it seems, from parents and the community. It seems that we are fostering little romances at very young ages – too young for kids to be able to handle the consequences. Do you see that as a contributing factor to the vulnerability of our teens?

Dr. Spivak:

That is a very good point. I have a little trouble responding to that because there are two things that I think are happening around gender relationships between children that are almost running counter to each other and I am perplexed by it. I certainly do not fully understand it.

The sexual messages that we are giving our children are extremely powerful, extremely concerning, and are reaching younger and younger ages. Every product in this country is sold by some sexual message. That has a huge effect on younger kids and that probably is promoting behaviors long before kids are developmentally ready for it. There probably are consequences to that.

But the other thing that I am beginning to observe, both among patients and with my own children, and from actual data, is that kids are beginning to put off sexual behavior for the first time in decades. The ages are beginning to move up again. I am seeing in older high school kids, and I see through my daughter, that there is very little dating going on. Kids are actually interacting, cross gender, in groups. The pressure to

have sex, once you pair off is so great that kids are putting it off as long as they can. So a lot of the dating is group dating.

And I do not know what to make of it, because it certainly does run counter to all of the other messages. Understanding that might actually be helpful. Because if kids' behaviors are changing in a positive way, then we really need to figure out why and use it in other elements as well. There is potential value in understanding some of those dynamics – both the bad stuff that is happening to younger kids and why, and what is happening to older kids where things may be going in the right direction.

Q: I do a lot of work with faculties in public schools. One of the comments that you made – almost in passing – that I would like to reinforce, is the comment that you made about how we must nurture adults. Adults who are teaching conflict resolution, haven't themselves learned it. So we have situations in which the lessons end, and the adult teaching the lesson blows up.

I was in a school yesterday in which the faculty members have committed themselves, voluntarily, to work with me after school to learn conflict resolution skills. There is no support from the school committee or from the community at large – this is entirely a voluntary effort. These are adults who have recognized that they simply cannot do the school reform work that they are pushed to do, if they do not learn the skills that are necessary and that they have never learned.

I wish that I had it on tape – it was one of the most dramatic moments I have seen in over thirty years in public education. They were clearly saying, "we have none of these skills. We don't know how to treat each other respectfully. We don't know how to have intelligent conversations with each other. We are incredibly polite to each other, and talk behind each other's backs. The reform is not happening in our school." And this, by the way, is a very good school and by any public measure would be considered one of our better schools.

When we get into our small groups today, it is certainly one of the things that I am going to bring up much more dramatically. We really need to nurture adults and take care of what we might call the mental health agenda of those who nurture our children.

Dr. Spivak: That is certainly a good point. And I hope that I didn't simply say that in passing. I had intended to say that assertively. I have two comments about it. One is that when we began training teachers in the violence prevention curricula that we developed and have been developing, we immediately learned that we had to put the teachers through the curriculum themselves, because they were uncomfortable teaching it without coming to some peace and resolution with their own experiences and their own attitudes about violence. It is extremely important.

The other thing is that the school in Jonesboro was not only one of the more affluent schools, but it was a school that had been doing conflict resolution and violence prevention curricula. The issue there was that there was a disconnect between the teaching programs and the environment that the kids were in – both in school and in their communities. It is all linked. No one piece of this will work without the other pieces. Maybe not all at once, because it is a big agenda to take. But if you are going to teach a curriculum in school for kids, you must at the very least, make sure that the school environment for the teachers supports their appropriate behavior and modeling. And it is

extremely important that the larger community be supporting the values that are being taught to kids. Kids do not learn from what they are told, they learn from what they see.

Thank you.

PANEL PRESENTATION

Jeffrey Pine, Attorney General, State of RI

Thank you Kathryn and thank you to all those who made this conference possible today. I think that it is a very important conference, which is why I contacted Kathryn to speak about this issue. And I especially enjoyed hearing from Dr. Spivak, whom I have not had the privilege of meeting but certainly have had the privilege of reading. And his comments are very well taken and very much on point. He is recognized as a national leader on the subject of safe schools, and the problems confronting our youth.

R.I. is certainly no exception in terms of the many issues and challenges facing this nation with respect to school violence and making sure that our schools are safe. If you know me at all, then you know that it has been a top priority for my administration since I began in 1993 and remains so at the end of 1998. I am pleased to be here on this panel and to engage in this discussion.

I thought that I would give you a little bit of an overview and a follow up, as well as raise some specific points about where the state needs to go at this point. Many good things are happening at this point. We have statutes on the books that are designed to protect kids from guns. We have statutes that require the reporting of crimes or violent assaults in the schools. We have done many good things as a group over the last several years. But we also know that we are not immune from this problem. The attitude of "violence can't happen here" is a myth – it can happen. And it is our job to make sure that it does not. And in the tragic event that it does, we need to be prepared to deal with it. So I thought that I would give specific thoughts and recommendations in order to spark some discussion.

As recently as September 22 of this year, I, along with several other Attorney Generals around the country, joined the National Schoolboard Association to form a partnership that had always existed rather informally. Many Attorney Generals, including myself, work on this issue of safe schools, but there was never a formal association between the National Schoolboard Association and our group. This partnership has now been formalized as a specific entity, to work together nationally, regionally, and locally, to work with our various school districts, school committees, superintendents, principals, and law enforcement members, to promote and to do actual things about promoting safe schools in our respective states.

One of the things that came out of the announcement and the partnership on September 2, was a ten point plan that our organization adopted as recommendations to be implemented at the local level as the individual communities see fit. And as I go through these ten points, many of them will sound familiar to you, and several are being implemented in various school districts around the state. But I am of the firm belief that we need to do more and that some of these things that should be operating on a state-wide basis, are not. So as I go through them, I will raise some questions for you.

1. There should be a partnership between school officials and law enforcement. That is self-evident. And we have that in our state – a zero tolerance policy that was inaugurated in 1993 and which has been adopted state-wide, furthers that and emphasizes the partnership and the communication that is necessary between school officials and the local police. If an incident happens, it must be reported so that the police can use their discretion as to how it should be dealt with and whether or not the court system should be involved.

2. School crime reporting and tracking mechanism: there should be methods developed at the local level to report, track, and monitor any crime committed on school campuses. Again, I think that that is happening in Rhode Island.

3. Student participation. I think that Dr. Spivak's comments, as well as all of our experiences, indicate that student participation is extremely important. Student involvement is essential in solving and preventing violent acts on school campuses. He talked about after-schools programs and he is absolutely right. In my travels around the state it is always the first thing cut. The down time in which school children are most likely to get in trouble is that time between three and nine in the evening. That is the time when their energy is the highest and when we need to keep them busy. So we need to fund – and it is a money issue many times – but we need to have the political will to address this issue and not to cut the valuable programs that can be an outlet for the positive energy that our students can have. So student participation is essential.

   A second element of student participation that Dr. Spivak touched on, is that element of mediation or conflict resolution. And that is something that I believe in very strongly. For the past several years my office has been granting money to schools for the elementary school peer mediation programs. Because it does happen very often in the state that at the junior high and high school levels, there are already peer mediation programs in effect. It does not happen as often at the elementary school level, and it should. The learning process should happen when kids are eight, nine, and ten. So we have granted money to several schools to embark on a peer mediation and conflict resolution program in the fourth, fifth, and sixth grade levels. And you should all know that we are doing it again this year, and we still have some money available. If you are aware of an elementary school in your school district or in your community that would like to participate, they have to have the follow through, they have to have the faculty involvement, they have to fill out an application before we grant them money, we are not just throwing it at them. But if there is the commitment to do a peer mediation program at the elementary school level, I would urge you or someone to contact my office soon. We do have the money, we have received it through grants, and we do disperse it around the state and we intend to do that this year.

4. Parent participation is essential. Parents must be encouraged to participate as often and as much as possible in school functions so that they become a part of the school community.

5. Drug and alcohol prevention programs are crucial, and that does occur on many levels. I have been to many schools and many graduations of the DARE program and other programs that teach kids to stay on the right track.

6. There should be a concise discipline code for all students that should be strictly enforced. This is a code of conduct, which I know happens in a number of school districts, but which should happen state-wide. There should always be a specific, enforceable, and immediately responding discipline code for students.

7. Training for school personnel. I don't know if this is happening, but there should be annual in-service training prior to the beginning of the school year as well as during the school year for school officials – teachers, support personnel, and others — on the issues of security and violence. Ten or twenty years ago we may not have needed this, but today we do. There must be some kind of training for the school people themselves.

8. School security. Each school has to assess its school security system. It must have proper supervision of students and of the campus as a whole in order to in order to maximize and ensure it is a safe school.

9. A school needs to conduct an annual security assessment of the school facility – an environmental design assessment, if you will. A detailed outline of whether or not there are areas of the campus, the buildings themselves or anything else that are accessible to emergency personnel if a crisis were to happen, and to make sure that that school is doing everything that it can to maximize security and to minimize the outside threat, or even inside threat. Not metal detectors, or anything like that, but a practical consulting assessment of the school facility by a professional, to make sure that somebody goes through to make recommendations to the school committee and to the principal to make sure that from an environmental design perspective, that school is maximizing its safety.

10. A crisis management plan. An effective crisis management plan involves school personnel, law enforcement, medical rescue personnel, other emergency management personnel, school districts, school committees, and anyone else that may be involved in responding to the kind of crisis that we all don't want to think about but must be prepared for. I have talked to people from the commissioner of education's office, and they agree with me that this is something that must be established state-wide with a specific crisis management plan for that eventuality. We must be ready to handle either an outside agent or an inside agent, a shooting, or a hostage situation – any of those things that we read about. We must be prepared to respond – not just to that incident, but to maximize and protect the safety of the innocent people who might be exposed and who must be protected from the danger.

That is the ten point plan that I am happy to share with all of you. I am happy to answer any of your questions before my time runs out. As a follow-up to what Dr.

Spivak talked about, I think that these are questions that are very relevant to anyone involved with children or school personnel.

1. Do you know the early warning signs for a student who is either depressed or potentially violent?
2. Are you familiar with the imminent warning signs for someone who is seriously depressed?
3. Is there someone on the staff or a consultant who deals with people in this situation?
4. When was the last security assessment done of the school facilities and properties?
5. Are there recommendations that have not been acted upon if that assessment has been done?
6. Is there in-service training for teachers and support personnel?
7. Is there a crisis response plan in effect? Usually there is a plan to deal with natural disasters – hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, etc. We need to expand that to the man made disasters.
8. Is there sufficient communication between school and police, fire, and other emergency personnel?
9. Is there a protocol in place for threat assessment – to separate the serious from the tough talking types. We have learned from other communities that have gone through this that there was usually a warning, a threat, a comment from the perpetrator that provided a clue about what was going to happen. We must be able to assess from a professional point of view, threat assessment when kids are acting out, talking out, and sometimes forecasting their own violent behavior.
10. Is there a discipline code or code of conduct in place? Is it being strictly enforced?

I raise those in general, and I know that there is a lot more discussion that can take place. From my perspective, the ten points that I raised and the ten questions that I am asking, need to be discussed by all of us. In doing so, I think that we will be taking appropriate action to ensure that our schools continue to be safe, because I believe they are. We must only need to make sure that they stay that way.

Thank you.

A. Kathryn Power

We will make sure that everybody has a copy of the Attorney General's ten point plan so that you can use that in your discussions.

The second panelist is a long-time community leader and community advocate. She represents one of our sponsors. The Department of Education was very clear in telling us that part of the way that they wanted to bring about discussion today, because the Commissioner of Education was not able to be here, is to have someone from the Board of Regents with us. I am delighted to introduce Jo Eva Gaines from the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education.

Jo Eva Gaines, Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education

Thank you very much. I see myself as a lifetime educator. I worked in the public schools for thirty years, plus a few extras, and I am now on the staff here at Salve Regina. My vocation is advocacy for children. As a teacher, my concern was those little bodies that were in front of me daily -- that they learn, that they be safe, that they be secure. And that has not changed – they are a little bit bigger now, but the safety issue is still an issue, even at the college level.

But I am here representing elementary and secondary education. And the Department of Education does comply with all of the state statutes involving safety in schools. There are initiatives that we have run that are successful in many communities – the COZY centers, that many of you are familiar with, the human services malls -- places where children can come when they feel threatened, when they need the security of a caring adult. Conflict resolution and peer mediation is implemented in most schools. Where there is a request for teacher training in these areas, there are experts in the Department of Education who work with the local schools in helping them to perfect these programs.

There is one school in RI that is implementing a crisis management program. It happens to be Newport, so I am sure that Dr. Power will address that during his session. One of the things that we look at from a policy perspective, in ensuring the safety of our children and the education of families, involves movements to lengthen the school year, to keep the schools open longer during the day, to have the schools more accessible to the families. Unfortunately, most of these initiatives require money.

We are forced, in our state, to rely on the property tax to support our schools – that is a burden. And we have a population that is getting older. Most of the older people do not have children in schools, so there seems to be a generational division. An adult with no children in the school system, often does not comprehend the responsibility for the younger generation. They want to say that it is not their problem. We see clearly that violence is everybody's problem. It is a problem in getting to the solution of educating the entire community about their responsibility and their need to be concerned about other segments of the society that they do not see themselves associating with. That is a problem that we will have to solve. I don't have the answers, but maybe together we can find solutions to these problems.

In Dr. Spivak's opening remark, he said that if we think about it, all of us have experienced violence in some way. And I thought for a moment, thinking about how lucky I was – that I had not experienced violence in my life. And suddenly I realized that that is not true. My house has been broken into a couple of times. And I remembered an incident when I was in the sixth grade that has stayed with me until this day in the recesses of my mind, and occasions like this bring it to the forefront.

I was a sixth grader – rather timid (though not anymore) – and there was a group of girls who had decided that they were going to get me. And the only way that I could save myself was to fight another girl. They picked a girl who was quiet, who was nice, who didn't bother anybody, and I was told that if I did not beat this girl up, then they would get me. And I felt very much like the young man that you spoke to. I had a choice: do I fight this girl? Or do I just turn around and take my lickin'?

I suppose that I was a coward, because I picked a fight with this girl and I have never forgotten it. I felt so small. Needless to say, I picked the fight, but I did not win it. And it cured me from ever fighting again, but it also made me feel rather cheap. That I had picked on a girl who had not bothered me. I had no reason to do this, but I did it – to save myself. It is not an occasion that I am proud of, and the idea that violence is a learned behavior and that peer pressure can bring it on is so true. We need to find ways to help our young people avoid these situations that get them into trouble.

Bob Power, Director of Student Support Services, Newport Schools

I would first like to say that Newport schools would be more than happy to take that money for the mediation programs.

Today, sitting in the audience, I had a chance to think about some of the issues that I have come across in my career. Unfortunately, I was in a school system ten years ago where a child was shot in the head at lunchtime. That was in Bristol, a community where people did not think that that kind of event could occur. A student had brought a gun to school on a regular basis. The other kids knew about it. He was trying to sell the gun to somebody else. He had gotten it from his father's gun collection. Unfortunately, on the day that he brought the gun to school one of the larger football players told him that he would be beating him up at lunchtime. So when lunchtime came around, the student went up to the football player, put the gun to his head, and pulled the trigger. That student did not die from the gunshot wound, but unfortunately he is physically handicapped today.

That was a wake-up call for the school system and for the community. As you can imagine, the people said, "But it doesn't happen here." The good news is that we had a relationship with the Community Mental Health Center that we had had for a number of years, so we had a lot of people come to the school immediately to work with the faculty and the kids about that issue.

Again in Newport, two years ago, I was working in a district where a child was murdered by her step-father. As you can imagine, in a small community like this, that event had a rather dramatic effect. Everyone said, "why has this happened in my community?"

So on two occasions, we have had the opportunity to deal with that issue. And as Jo Eva said, for the second of the two events, we do have a crisis plan here in Newport. It is a manual that we are in the process of revising. But we did have that on hand and we did have a lot of procedures in place.

Newport, as you look at Newport and look in this building, and as it is represented by its Chamber of Commerce, is the Newport of the affluent and a resort. If you work in the school departments here, you know that the students who come to school every day do not reflect that background. We have free and reduced lunch for about forty percent, so that can give you some indication of the socio-economic needs of some of the students in our district.

As I have listened to people talk this morning, I feel very good. Newport either has in place or is putting in place many of the programs that they have discussed. We have a project called Project Reach where we have transitions before project Head Start and between Project Head start and kindergarten. It had family services workers who bridged the gap and got families involved in schools at an early age, which is a very helpful

process for those families coming in. And we tried to keep them involved as opposed to simply coming and dropping the kids off in the morning and that is the last that we see of them for twenty-four hours.

We have had a family center out of the Sullivan Center, a school at the northern end of the city that has a lot of kids that come in with a lot of needs, and that has been in place for a period of time and continues to grow. We have had a peer mediation program out there for a number of years that the principal started calling "Soaring Eagles." That has been in place for about seven or eight years. We have also done other mediation programs at some, but not all, of the other elementary schools. So I am definitely a great supporter of that and of putting more of those in place.

We are also fortunate to have a DARE program in place with the Police Department for grades k – 12. That takes place in all of the schools. The five affiliated officers have been welcomed into the schools. We utilize them not only for the DARE program, but for general work with the kids. They tend to serve as positive role models for the children in the city.

At the junior high school level we have done some things, as Jo Eva mentioned, with Human Services that we began nine years ago. A group of social services agencies have offices in the middle school and are available to kids and can receive assistance about a variety of issues. Referrals come from the guidance department. They do not go out and look for kids in the hallway, but whenever there is an issue with a family, we have that facility available. And the unique aspect is that the funding comes from Newport Hospital. They saw it as their issue to do something in the community for mental health issues. And they felt that that was the way to capture a group of kids for a significant period of time, and to have a significant impact on that. So when RI Foundation funding ran out on the program, Newport Hospital picked it up and funded it for the last couple of years. So that is a partnership we have and a non-traditional funding source.

We have had some anti-violence programs that they have run through that mall, and some other social services and agencies that come in there. There are mentoring and tutoring programs through the mall and through the school department. We have had about thirty-five to forty tutors who come from either the military or a local bank. We have had a lot of opportunity to bring in adults to make a positive impact on some kids.

At the high school level we have had the student activities center which is similar to a mall, and this is a program that was originally funded by the RI Foundation and has been picked up recently by a local social service agency. This provides a variety of services and supports to the guidance department. It provides activities after school and field trips – the most popular is a trip to the ACI which looks at the population out there. The kids come back saying, "wow, I never realized that is where I could end up." That has had an impact on those kids. We have a partnership set up with Salve Regina University. Their students have come in and gotten involved with our students.

Community policing has been big here in Newport, and we have had community police officers come in to the middle school and the high school. We have had police officers in the high school for a number of years. That person is in the lunch room and in a variety of places around the school – not necessarily in uniform, so that kids have had an opportunity to know the police department in a different sense. Through this program we have also gotten a lot of feedback about things that may be about to occur in the

community and that we can therefore stop before they ever occur. We have also had a "Natural Helpers" which is a peer counseling designed to help kids before they begin thinking about suicide and helping with any of the many issues that they may have. That was created in direct response to some issues that we had a few years ago – there were a number of teenage suicides.

We also have the Newport Alternative School, and a Diploma Plus program, both of which are designed to help kids who do not fit into the traditional educational system. Again, we do not want those kids to leave the school, we simply want to find alternative programs in order to work with them.

We have also done many programs with the community and with social service agencies. We currently have an initiative in the city that involves the school department, the social service agencies, and the city council, around issues in the community. We have set goals for the community in terms of literacy, recreation, and other targets designed by the community in order to better the programs for youth and for the community at large.

I would also like to tell you some of our statistics. At the high school we have had an eighty percent reduction in calls to the police department from the school due to the programs that we have put in during the last three years. We have found a substantial drop in juvenile crime in Newport between three and six o'clock – during the after-school program hours. We have not, however, had a decrease in the juvenile crime rate after six, when our after-school programs are over. We are working to decrease the crime rate then, as well, since the correlation has indicated that our programs are effective.

As the Attorney General noted, we have a safety task force in Newport that meets and talks about safety in the buildings. We have worked with the local response team at the police department, and they have done drills in the evenings to make sure that they know the layout of the schools and they have a plan in case a situation does occur.

There has been a crisis manual in place for a number of years so that we have a way to respond to situations that arise. And we have used that manual on a number of occasions and in a variety of scenarios.

That gives you a general overview of what we do in Newport. I feel very good here, knowing that we have done many of the things that people have suggested and knowing that there are many things that we can still do. And it is because of the cooperation of the police department that we are able to do all of these extraordinary programs.

Thank you.

Steven Weaver, Executive Director, RI Municipal Police Training Academy

I was Chief of the Police Department in Newport for nine years and on the department for twenty-eight – a very, very long time. I left there two years ago to become the director of the academy. Prior to doing that, however, we, in the Newport department, initiated a community policing approach around 1987 or 1988. Over time we have had some great successes with it, particularly in the arena of juvenile problems or youth violence. We have developed one notable program with DCYF that has become a national model. Officer William Fitzgerald was the leader in the development of that

program. He and I have both traveled around the country lecturing about the program and its development.

Leaving Newport and going to the academy, my principal mission was to increase the in-service training at the academy. It is crucial to continue the training of even veteran, active-duty officers. As chief, I felt that the academy was not providing enough.

In the year that I retired from Newport, the academy had trained about two-hundred officers in the in-service training. This year we trained twelve-hundred, so we have substantially increased that. The training includes some of the operational things that must go on (forensics, police operations, and tactics), but we have also increased in-community policing, problem solving, networking, and leadership training. If changes in attitude and behavior are going to occur in police departments, that must come from the top.

We have entered into a contract with Bryant College where we are running a police leadership institute. Bryant, as you know, is a notable business school and we are team-teaching with CEO's from businesses in the private sector and police executives in RI with certain expertise. We offer five modules of courses. Additionally, there is currently a five day seminar for first line supervisors. We are hosting it, and AMICA, an insurance company in Lincoln, has provided their facilities to us free of charge.

All of these leadership trainers are focused on expanding the philosophy of policing, specifically with respect to community policing. We are causing police department to work with social service agencies, counselors, educators, the community as a whole, and opening up departments to that process.

In Newport, for example, it originally had thirteen DCYF group homes – a significant number for a city which only has five or seven square miles. And they were problematic. Neighborhoods often did not want the group homes in their communities. We took on the issue of these group homes and the effects on the communities, and looked at what seemed to be the worst group home, the one which required the most police response. Indeed, at this group home, a female one, there were over 200 calls for police service in one year. There was everything ranging from runaways to assaults on counselors. Targeting that group home, the officers sat down with counselors for Child and Family Services, who are contracted with DCYF, and DCYF representatives to try to determine how we could most make an impact.

We try to teach the officers that crime is not the problem. Nor is drugs, gangs, violence, or any of those issues – those are the symptoms. It is our issue to try to find the roots of the symptoms. If we can attack the root successfully, then the symptoms will go away. It was determined that the problem in this situation was with the girls in the group home – their lack of self esteem, the lack of role models in their lives, their value systems, and other such issues.

To address that, the officers came here, to Salve Regina University, and asked for young women, preferably psychology, sociology, education, or criminal justice majors, to serve as role models to each of the girls in the group home. Thus the positive role model program was formed.

It is a very elaborate program, a lot of controls, background checks, interviews. The program has expanded over the years. After the first year in that original group home, the two-hundred calls were reduced to seventeen and has never grown any larger since then. The neighborhood's attitude to the home changed drastically. We had the

girls outside doing various projects – painting Mrs. Murphy's fence and cleaning up the neighborhood. A relationship was then formed between the kids and the neighbors. Field trips were conducted, not only for social reasons, but also for educational reasons. They were brought to museums and aquariums. The girls from Salve were asked to bring them here, to the University, to expose them to the environment, to work with them on their study habits, and to give them some self-esteem and a hope for the future.

Over the seven or eight years that I was involved with the program, which has expanded to include males and public housing, eighty percent of the kids in the program graduated from high school. Of those, sixty-six percent went on to college. Almost all of those kids were the first kids in their families to go on to higher education. We have also established a scholarship program with Salve Regina for the kids in that program. The first girl from that first group home, came to Salve on a scholarship and came back as a role model to other kids in the group home. She has since graduated from Salve Regina, and we have had many success stories like that.

The point being, that if you identify the root of the problem and eliminate that, you can also eliminate the symptoms that go along with it. This is what we are teaching officers to do. They cannot do that alone. We are not in the business of counseling youth or substance abusers. It is our function to arrest people – if we don't, no one else will. We are in charge of setting the parameters for behavior. But that does not mean that we cannot take a further step and assist and identify causes, and then reach out to other agencies and collaborate to attack the roots.

Thank you.

POST-PANEL QUESTION AND ANSWER PERIOD

Q: I have a comment for Steven. You said that police are not counselors or teachers, but in my practice and in my observations, as well as in the example that Dr. Spivak gave, the police have a very delicate and difficult job when they respond to family violence calls, and I have seen them do some very fine counseling, whether it is to get a couple apart from each other and to talk the man--usually--down. It is a very important part of police training, because you are the first one to respond.

Weaver: I think that police officers often have a good ability in those kinds of situations, currently, to resolve the instant problem by exhibiting some counseling skill. But it is neither our job nor our expertise to resolve that family in crisis. Shortly before I retired we were working on a grant to work with the women's resource center and to initiate a program in which, when the police respond to a domestic violence call, there would also be an instant response from women's counselors to the scene. Those counselors immediately attach to the victim and walk this person through the criminal justice system. Those are the things that police can do. But the issue of counseling the batterer and the victim is not what we do. And if we are, then it means that we are not doing our other jobs.

Q: In your booklets there is an updated progress report on emotional competency programs in RI. Essentially what it says is that several agencies, education, mental

health, DCYF, health, have been beginning to look at all of the programs in communities aimed at addressing certain components of behaviors in kids. We are asking communities to create coherent policies to address violence prevention, teen pregnancy prevention, drug and alcohol abuse, and other issues.

This is directed at Jo Eva Gaines and perhaps also to other members of the panel. I would like to ask you to consider two things. Recently the health department completed a survey of high-risk behaviors in schools. There were several things relating to anxiety and depression in kids, and participating in high-risk behaviors was increasing. And that survey had important messages for the school systems and communities to take a look at.

Second, the SALT survey was just completed by the Department of Education under the sponsorship of the Board of Regents. It asks many questions of educators and school children about their emotions and feelings and things that are affecting their lives. It addresses self-esteem, issues regarding families and environments.

Do you see these surveys as helpful to schools? Are you able to formulate programs based on the information? Is the community at large needed to join with the school district in order to formulate responses to the surveys?

Gaines: Yes, the community must be involved. This is not a problem that any one segment can solve. It requires that people work together. The SALT survey points out problems that we share with community organizations. They must form partnerships with the local schools to address the problems.

The accountability issue will be a part of the framework that we use in setting up these areas for the personnel in the Department of Education to help the local communities and the local schools in getting these issues addressed.

Pine: On the SALT survey, the information that we were trying to get back had a lot to do with seeing what are the issues surrounding students' learning. One of the ways to do that is to look at the other parts of the community that can impact that and what do those things look like? The SALT survey is an attempt to get at that. In Article 31 we are looking at kids' standards and trying to raise the educational arena. But we also know that we have to look at the other things that impact this, and if we are not clear on what those things are, and if we don't target some of those, then we will not get the results that we would like to get.

If we don't form a partnership with social service agencies and other community resources, we may be able to make some changes in the classroom, but without affecting the larger issues of kids in the community, we will not achieve the desired results. The SALT survey is our attempt to say "here are the other things that you may want to look at when you try to raise student performance."

FINAL COMMENTARY

Dr. Spivak

Good morning everyone, again. I would like to make a couple of comments, but would like to start with the fact that I think that all of the comments made by the panelists were both very relevant and very much in line with the perspectives that we all need to bring to this issue. I would like to state, in that context, with the preface that I am not

looking for a job, that you are lucky to have both a Governor and an Attorney general who bring a far healthier perspective to this issue than I have seen in many other places around the country. And I encourage all of you to take advantage of that. The political tide in this country is not taking things in the right direction, regarding this issue, so you have a unique opportunity to do things differently.

There are five things that I would like to touch on very quickly that have grown out of the comments made by others a few minutes ago.

The first is that I would like to talk for a minute about meanness and forgiveness. We have moved in a bad direction in this country where we value meanness in interpersonal and in institutional relationships, in the political arena, and even in our human service system. We have created protocols and structures that punish people if they do not do things the way that we want them to do things. And we have to take a step back from this and look carefully at how we do our business in all of these levels, because it is a terrible message to give our young people.

The flip side of that is that we have somehow defined forgiveness as weakness, and this is also a bad message to give young people. All of us have done things that we should not have done (especially as adolescents) and often we did it because we had problems and we were waving a red flag because we needed something. Not only must we create good structure around young people so that they behave properly, but when they do not behave properly, we must embrace them as much as we reprimand them. These kids are hurting, and we need to flip a very mean spirited cultural agenda, to one that is sensitive and nurturing, and really does see the importance of forgiveness in how we relate to young people.

My second point that I would like to address briefly, has been said by several other speakers here, and I think is very important. All of the work that we do must involve young people at every level – from the early planning stages to the service system development. They keep us honest, if nothing else. They are reality testers for us and they bring perspective to the discussion. We cannot lose sight of that, and we cannot bring them in at a late point. Kids are distrusting to begin with, so to bring them in once we have decided what is wrong and how to fix it, is not the solution. They need to be part of the process and the discussion from the very beginning.

The third thing that I want to touch on, and again, this was mentioned several times, is the whole concept of mentoring and volunteerism. There are many numbers that tell us what the risk factors are. We also have numbers of protective factors. Probably the most protective factor for young people is having a mentoring adult in their lives. Whether it is a parent or a teacher or an outreach w[illegible]er or a neighbor does not matter. Children need supportive adults in their lives who help them to feel not only cared for, but also model good behavior for them. We must look for opportunities to incorporate this kind of intervention in all of the work that we do. And it is possible.

I ran a program in Boston that was a parenting aide or nurturing program for teenage parents. We recruited volunteers from local minority churches in the inner city of Boston, even after we were told that you cannot recruit volunteers from poor communities. Wrong. There is a wealth of talent and caring in these communities. They need to be part of the process. They need to be enlisted in this. This is a program where we hooked up these church people with young teenage parents. In over two and a half years, these parents did not have a single second pregnancy. If any of you know anything

about teenage pregnancy, that is almost unheard of. The second baby usually comes along as soon as physiologically possible. There is a richness to draw on there.

The fourth point that I want to make is that it is extremely important to have the police involved at all levels and in all of the coalitions that we develop. Police have, to some extent by their own structure, and to a large extent by the culture in which they work, been put in very adversarial and negative roles. That is not what they are – they are important helpers and supporters in a community. Young people need to see them that way. Police in schools out of uniform is extremely helpful. Community policing, where police and community residents get to know each other is very important. When people interact on a personal level, good things happen. When people remain blank faces or faceless human beings – and that is true both of the police toward the kids and of kids toward the police – it creates adversarial and negative relationships, and no one helps anybody. They are too caught up in the negative interactions.

The last point that I would like to make, which grows out of all of the comments that have been made, is that underlying all of this work, is the hard work of building coalitions. Because bringing people together is the first important step toward dealing with this issue. And when I talk about coalitions, I am talking about a matrix, not a coalition in the community, and a coalition at the state house level, and coalitions at all different levels. I talk about a fabric where coalitions within their own structure are vertical – from the lowest levels of community residents and kids up through the most senior levels of policy makers, all interacting, at least in part in the process. And then the horizontal segment, which is the spectrum of health, and human service, and criminal justice and religious, and community agency systems that run across the board. Because fabrics are much stronger than threads. And that is how we must look at it.

This is an incredibly strong beginning – or rather, more than a beginning since there is a lot in place here – and I do wish you all the best in your work. Thank you.

A. Kathryn Power

Thank you Howard, very much. I want to thank the reactor panel, Attorney General Jeffery Pine, Jo Eva Gaines from the Board of Regents, Dr. Bob Power from the Newport Schools, and Steven Weaver from the Municipal Police Training Academy. They were wonderful.

President Anton said this morning that she sees this as a call to action. We think that we have given you some good things to think about. We would like you to digest them as you digest your food.

We have Salve faculty who are aimed and poised and ready to help you discuss. The reality is, we are going to come up with some public policy that we are recommending to the Governor. That is why this is being taped. That is why Jay is going to lead us in a firm discussion in the middle of the afternoon. We are going to take this and come out with some solid recommendations. We need your input for that, based on what you have experienced this morning. So with that, I want to remind you to fill out the evaluations from your folders. You have an hour and fifteen minutes to work together, to coalesce. And the facilitators from Salve are so good that I know that it will work. Thank you all very much.

GOVERNOR'S PROCLAMATION

A. Kathryn Power

Ladies and Gentleman, we have a smaller but spirited group here this afternoon to finalize our discussion. But before that occurs I would like to present a proclamation on behalf of the Governor to Dr. Barbara Cage, if she is here. Dr. Cage, why don't you come up here.

Dr. Cage is the Vice President of Academic Affairs for Salve Regina. I have this proclamation to read on behalf of the Governor. It says:

The State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations has issued a gubernatorial proclamation. The day of national concern for young people and violence will be observed on October 8th 1998, giving students the opportunity to sign a voluntary promise that they will never carry a gun to school, resolve a dispute with a gun, or use influence with their friends to keep them from resolving a dispute with a gun.

And whereas, by taking part in this large national observance, young people can envision a possibility of reversing the tide of violence and diminishing one of the greatest threats to health and safety.

And whereas every student in the country, from middle school to high school, will be given a copy of the pledge, and teachers will be given a list of suggested activities to go along with it.

And whereas, on October 1, 1998, the State of Rhode Island sponsored a Summit on Safe Schools in Safe Communities, in cooperation with the Salve Regina University, Pell Center for International Relations and Public Policy, the Rhode Island Division of Mental Health, Retardation, and Hospitals, the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

And whereas the summit focused on the uncovering of potential risks, the discovery of creative solutions, and the recovery of healthy and safe communities.

And whereas in light of acts of violence that have recently afflicted our nation's schools, it is crucial for us to engage in constructive dialogues to review our policies for safe schools in safe communities.

Now therefore, I, Lincoln Almond, Governor of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, do hereby proclaim, October 1, 1998, as Governor Almond's Summit on Safe Schools in Safe Communities in Rhode Island, and encourage all assistance in recognizing the importance of such educational initiatives.

It is signed by the Governor, and by Secretary of State, James R. Langevin. And we thought that this was an appropriate proclamation for us to give to the Salve Regina University Pell Center for International Relations and Public Policy, since this was the very first public policy forum held in this magnificent edifice. Thank you very much.

REPORTS FROM THE AFTERNOON WORKSHOPS

I now have the chance to put myself in the audience and participate in a little bit of a different way. I am now going to turn over the moderation of this event to a friend and

a colleague. I will show you the kind of collaboration that goes on in the executive branch. Jay Lindgren has been here with us all day. We have done a variety of discussions and planning with DCYF around a variety of issues, but particularly with regard to emotional competency. And I am delighted to say that he is both my friend and my colleague.

Jay Lindgren, Director, RI Department of Children, Youth, and Families

Just to tell you what friendship means, I called Kathryn Power three years ago, when we were embarking on the Governor's Criminal Justice Reform Task Force. I said that we were going to divide up programmatically along the entire spectrum from the very little kids intervention to the training school. And I said that the easiest task is the training school, and I asked her to head up that committee.

Of course, those of you that remember about two or three years ago, we were in a fit of controversy in that place. Kathryn did not even pause and immediately said yes. I will never forget, the entire family court met in a church in Providence to present what that group had come up with. It was a subcommittee report for the final report that we put together. And Kathryn led the presentation. And the fun thing to watch was not that the judges were watching and paying close attention at a tough time of day. But the training school staff almost literally grew in stature of the promise at that phase. And while we haven't exactly followed through on it yet, it is leaders like Kathryn who make things like that occur – who take tough situations and help turn them around.

Someone said that I collect wisdom, and I did move from group to group to take snapshots of each one. The thing that I noticed first was an education group that decided that classroom size was not an issue, because they had combined two groups into one and it was huge, although focused.

I got to the mental health group and they asked for two and a half more hours, and I thought that at least it is not DCYF – we would have asked for three years.

Then I went to the criminal Justice group, and noticed that Judge Jeremiah had changed groups. Apparently he heard the other group say that family court is a joke, so he got up and joined them. I asked the group if they would come forward, Chief O'Donnell told me only if they could sit in the middle. That was the only way that he would consent to come to the head table, so I will let him start. Chief O'Donnell from the Narragansett Police Department:

Chief O'Donnell

I had the opportunity to meet with a prestigious group. Our discussion group was Criminal Justice IIB. It had to do with discussing issues faced by youth. Some of the things that we noticed was a lack of family involvement, peer pressure, self-esteem, learned behaviors. With a youth that is surrounded by problems and limited resources available, they need an understanding of how to reach out and obtain service by social services groups. They need someone to direct them – a center to tell them where to go. That is what we experience in the police department. We are a support group for many other agencies. We run into problems with the schools, because we are limited in the information that we are able to give to each other.

We also talked about the lack of extended family and the prevalence of broken homes. Then we addressed the issue of violence and how youths can counter it. One of the other issues that we talked about was zero tolerance in school, but then we simply turn things into immediate behavior problems when we suspend students and allow them to go on the outside. Then we have a police problem and a neighborhood problem, when the kids are on the outside.

If a kid has a deviant behavior, then we need to address it within the school system, with support services that they can go to and address their behavior issues. Throwing kids out of the schools and into the streets only causes more problems.

The other thing that we talked about was finance – everyone needs money and there is very limited resources. No one gets all of the money that they need, and we therefore never fully fix any problem. We throw a small amount of money at departments and then only massage the issues instead of fixing them to completion.

Another issue that we talked about was kids having respect for each other and not saying anything negative – too often, when people say negative things to one another, the end result is violence.

One other condition that we brought up was that state aide be an issue among the ten points to address school violence. That would force them to address the ten points and zero tolerance in schools.

We also talked about domestic violence as something that affects kids' behavior in school. We tried to talk about why that condition continues to occur. Some reasons that we have found were tradition, ethnic behavior, power and control, self-esteem, drugs and alcohol. One way that we tried to address it was a grant for intervention programs to allow the family to look at the problem and begin to seek help. The Providence Police Department has asked for a grant to have the whole family come in. We are not going to become counselors. We want to find out who the support people are, and send families in that direction.

We are also always fighting the NRA. But that is a financially and congressionally backed organization. We just want to get guns off the street and will continue to work to do so.

In many of the human services organizations, in DCYF and in the police department, people are getting irritable. We see so many cases and become so overwhelmed that it is hard to stay positive. But it is crucial that we do – that we remain cheerful and remember our goal of helping people. So how do we do that? Again, some of the answer is financial. We need more people in order to reduce individual case-loads.

We also discussed where different social service agencies fall within the system. If, for example, there is a violent crime, do we concern ourselves with drug rehabilitation? The public outcry is that justice must be served and that we must put people away. There has to be more understanding for people to see how to best fix problems and to communicate with them better.

We have historically had problems with communication in schools – the schools are not able or willing to give out information. There must be more cooperation between police and schools. We are each protective of our information, but we have to have more mutual understanding in order to progress.

We can work with churches in order to create better programs.

Another possibility is a juvenile hearing board, which many towns have. Instead of bringing kids to the court system immediately, we bring them to the juvenile hearing board first. That has been successful in many communities.

Dr. Peter Mullen

We tried to divide issues into three categories – individual, cultural, and institutional – but, of course, they overlapped.

One of the things that we focused our discussion in mental health on, was early intervention. Our children's attitudes are formed so early, that it is important to reach the children even before they come to school.

Another area, particularly in education and intervention, that is important, is emotional competence. But no one really knows what that means. So we decided that it was important for social service providers and for children to have programs in order to gain a greater understanding of emotional competence. We need to expand both our knowledge of emotional competence and our ability to exercise it. So we need to work with both children and caregivers.

In terms of institutional and legislative action, one way available to address early intervention would be to extend the human service mall to all of the schools. When these services are available at the school, the violence acted out declines significantly.

Another thing that goes along with emotional competence, for human service providers particularly, was training to deal with both the short and long term effects of trauma. The long term effect of trauma is not so widely understood – that a person can be significantly changed, even bio-chemically changed, after a traumatic event. And we need to be more aware of that as it pertains to violence.

In terms of legislation and working with schools, there was a call for expanding the request for human assistance counselor program in schools. It has been under-funded in past years.

We discussed cultural issues and we explored the media and its impact on violence as a solution for our children. We also discussed video-games which are almost uniformly disgustingly violent.

So what can we, as human service providers, do about all of that? Both culturally and legislatively? We decided that it is important for us to reach out to the media, especially locally. As Tip O'Neill said, "all politics is local." I think that the single most powerful educational tool is the media, and it is under-utilized as such. If we could develop a liaison with the media, we could use that power for good.

There was a call to beef up the health education curriculum. Particularly focusing on violence prevention, and, because there is a correlation between violence and alcohol, to improve our education regarding substance abuse prevention.

On a cultural level we discussed the giant, unsolved problem of poverty. And we discussed having resources specifically for parents and single parents especially. We talked about developing experienced mentor parents to match up with new parents – especially young mothers – to talk about what to do when reaching a boiling point. We also talked about talking with pregnant women and increasing child-care availability so some of the pressure on parents can be alleviated. Also, we talked about offering free parenting classes.

Finally, on the institutional level, we talked about the need for a long-term plan that does not terminate at the end of an administration, but a five or ten year plan that attempts to deal with violence prevention.

Criminal Justice Group

Some of the themes that other groups mentioned did come up in our group as well. The other side of the zero tolerance policies, is the linkage between the action that a student does, and the consequences. And how attenuated those are in time. So our group discussed the possibility of same-day arraignment for children who use violence as a means to an end, instead of waiting several weeks for any consequence at all. So the use of same-day arraignments and the use of a juvenile hearing board, makes that a little less disjointed.

Sharing information is also important, in terms of both within the justice system and between agencies. Understanding that we have public disclosure laws and protection of privacy, but we do need to work on communication.

More true partnerships are beneficial. Many of the officers in our group had positive things to say about being officers who were assigned to schools. Many felt that they were a true part of the educational community, almost as if they were faculty members of the schools. They felt that they had a positive impact on the students in those situations. We wanted to see more true partnerships between probation, community agencies, criminal justice, and education.

We talked about early detection that might put kids at high risk – HIV, ADD, alcohol and drug use, etc. And perhaps we would like to see prenatal parenting classes as necessary as prenatal health provision. We would then follow through with postnatal assessments of family situations in order to get someone in the homes early on to see how things are going.

Culturally, we talked about the negativity of the media and the fact that events and consequences are not linked in society – for children, for adults, and are not evidenced by the media.

Bill Eyman, Department of Education

We experimented with creating a diagram. We came up with four categories: prevention, collaboration, training, and fixing it once it's broken. All of these are recommendations.

Bringing services into the schools.
Teaching peace in the schools.
Professional development expanded for all areas.
Teaching of conflict resolution to students, teachers, and parents.
Alternative schools that are zero reject schools.
Training adults in non-violence.
Teachers trained to have respectful dialogues among themselves.
The state taking responsibility for the placement of foster children.
Support to parents and teachers ongoing.
Building a whole school atmosphere and community that is nonviolent.
Research based programs versus a flavor-of-the-month approach.

Monthly meeting of police and other community people to share information regarding youth mobility.
Police and school collaborating more fully regarding criminal events or threats.
Look at confidentiality and determine what is both possible and effective.
Face to face meetings versus phones meetings.
Sharing information within schools.
Not only treat abuse, but recognize the causal factors of it.
Recognize existing youth leadership.
Have police teach the teachers about the law.
Bring the media into the dialogue and encourage them to portray the positive as well as the negative.
Train trainers to train their peers in mediation and conflict resolution.
Develop collective bargaining incentives for teachers to be involved in social and emotional pursuits.
Training the next generation of parents before they have children of their own.

Jay Lindgren

Obviously there were some very rich discussions. Thinking again about the keynote, it is very terrifying – hearing how we compare to the rest of the civilized world. Sometimes in day to day life, it is easy to become numb to that unless we remind ourselves.

But there are so many things going on today in the way of collaboration, multi-disciplinary teams that have had results. And looking at the two models that we discussed today – Boston and Newport – it is impressive. Part of what is so great about the hopefulness that is going on, is the attention that we are taking to positive things that can go on and the way that we can measure that progress.

One of the common themes that I have heard is working together. More and more I have realized that if we are talking about a problem, and we don't have the solution in the room, then we do not have a big enough group together. So we have to expand. And that is hard to do without losing focus.

As somebody who works in juvenile justice on the state end, the thing that struck me was the idea of zero tolerance. And there are three legs to that – that there will be no violence, there will be no weapons, and there will be no rejection. And as Dr. Spivak said, as we reprimand, we must embrace. And that is hard to do, but it must be done.

The gun issue – we have powerful lobbies in this state, and we have to get behind that. I walked through a hospital when I worked in Texas. There were four kids in there with gun injuries on the same day. One kid had his whole jaw blown out during a drive-by shooting. Another was unconscious with a point blank gunshot wound. Another child's injury was self-inflicted, and the fourth was a less serious leg wound.
It is so easy to stay out of touch from the reality. But every one of those injuries was caused by someone who had no reason and no business having a gun.

It is more traumatic for a child to see one parent assault another parent, then it is to be assaulted himself, in terms of long range consequences. And that surprised me. As bad as it is for a child to be beat up or to be raped, it is also hard for the child to see two people that they are supposed to love and that are supposed to love each other, hate each other. We need to do something about that issue.

The idea of poverty is a tough one. Particularly single women raising children. How are we supposed to bring people closer to the level at which we have deemed appropriate for people to live.

I like the matrix idea – the combination of vertical and multi-disciplinary communication and collaboration. The key to local institutions, after churches and families, are schools and police. And we have a task force this year that is dealing with the communication between schools and police – what information we should and shouldn't share. Certainly when it comes to public safety, we have to trust human services and education to share what they must.

It is clear from the work in Boston and Newport, that we can make a difference. We are not hopeless. We just need to work together in order to accomplish our goals. The main thing is to continue to come together to find solutions for our kids – they are depending on us.

A. Kathryn Power

Thank you Jay, and thank you all of our responders who so effectively captured the work that you did this afternoon. I said this morning that in the complex interactions of daily life, we want to learn to be responsive to the prevention of violent behavior. You have all responded to that call for action. I thank you for that and I thank you on behalf of the Governor for that. I personally promise to follow up on all of you who are here – to make sure that you get information that summarizes our efforts, that continues to focus this issue. I know that you will all go forward as individuals and as representatives of your organizations, and continue to act in a way that promotes many of the positive behaviors that we talked about today. I want to recognize the RI Anti-Violence coalition for being a resource to us in helping us to put together much of our information today. And the glue that held this event together were my staff – Don Galamaga, Arn Lisnoff, and Norm DuPont – who really ensured that all of the participants were fully informed. We put this together after very short notice. And that glue, of my staff, being able to talk with many different individuals and interact across many spectra of programs and the fabulous response of Salve Regina university made the day very worthwhile.

Thank you all for coming. I look forward to seeing you in the peaceful world that we will create. Thank you very much.

CONCLUSION

As can be seen from the foregoing, this summit was very productive, both in terms of the ideas contained in the presentations by Dr. Spivak and the reactor panel, and also in the large number of recommendations generated in the small group discussions. This report will be forwarded to a number of people, including the directors of the Rhode Island Departments of Children, Youth and Families, Elementary and Secondary Education, Mental Health, Retardation and Hospitals, Health, and Human Services; it is anticipated that this summit will provide further impetus and direction to our efforts at reducing the threat of violence faced by our youth, and by society in general.

Requests for additional copies of this report can be made by contacting Norman C. DuPont, Ph.D. at 401-462-6042.